WE CLAIM:

1. A method of negotiating a deal over a network of computers, the network including at least one or more computers connected to the Internet, the method comprising the steps of:

(1) posting, on an electronic list that can be viewed over the Internet, information regarding one or more offers to form a contract;

(2) posting on the electronic list one or more responses to the one or more offers;

(3) researching the one or more responses to determine whether they satisfy one or more contract criteria;

(4) negotiating over the network between at least two parties to accept or modify one or more of the responses; and

(5) electronically signing a document to consummate the contract.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein step (1) comprises the step of displaying offers and responses in a parent-daughter spatial relationship on a computer display.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of sorting the one or more offers and one or more responses according to a user-selected sort order.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein steps (1) and (2) are done anonymously, such that each party to the contract cannot determine the identity of the other party to the contract.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of simultaneous revealing the identity of each party prior to step (5).

6. The method of claim 4, wherein steps (1) and (4) comprise the step of sharing a single anonymous e-mail alias among a plurality of users.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

(6) registering keywords with an electronic agent that monitors the one or more offers and providing an e-mail address to be notified upon a keyword match; and

(7) in response to the electronic agent detecting the keyword match, transmitting a message to the e-mail address provided in step (6).

8. The method of claim 1, wherein step (2) comprises the step of clicking on a hyperlink linking the information posted in step (1) to a reply card.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein step (2) comprises the step of requiring the submission of certain information before the reply card will be accepted.

1   10. The method of claim 1, wherein steps (3) and (4) are performed a plurality of times

2   for a single contract, such that modifications are made to the one or more responses.

3   11. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of electronically registering a

4   plurality of entities that have signatory authority and correlating the registered entities with one

5   or more documents to which signatures can be affixed.

6   12. A method of displaying information on a computer display, comprising the steps of:

7   (1) displaying a first plurality of graphical objects each having a shape of a file folder

8   comprising a folder face and a labeled tab, wherein the first plurality of graphical objects are

9   stacked in a cascading arrangement; and

10   (2) in response to user activation of a "flip" tab, changing the graphical objects displayed

11   in step (1) to show a second plurality of graphical objects each having a shape of a file folder

12   comprising a folder face and a labeled tab,

13   wherein each of the first and second plurality of graphical objects can be brought to a

14   foreground position in front of other graphical objects by clicking on a corresponding labeled tab.

15   13. The method of claim 12, wherein each of the first and second plurality of graphical

16   objects has associated therewith one or more functions displayed on the folder face thereof,

17   wherein user can activate the one or more functions by clicking thereon.

18   14. A method of creating a user-defined networked environment across a plurality of

19   computers without requiring system administrator-level privileges, comprising the steps of:

20   (1) creating a group by providing a group identifier, a group description, and by

21   specifying a plurality of group members entitled to use the user-defined networked environment;

22   (2) selecting a plurality of web-based communication, collaboration, and transaction tools

23   from a list of available tools, wherein the selected tools are to be made available to the plurality

24   of group members specified in claim 1; and

25   (3) through the use of computer software, automatically creating the user-defined

26   networked environment by creating a web page accessible to the plurality of group members

27   selected in step (1), wherein the web page provides access to the plurality of tools selected in step

28   (2).

29   15. The method of claim 14, wherein step (1) comprises the step of inviting a plurality of

30   individuals to join the group by transmitting an invitation to prospective group members.

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16. The method of claim 14, wherein step (1) comprises the step of advertising an invitation to join the group by posting an advertisement for prospective group members, wherein at least some of the prospective group members are unknown to the user creating the networked environment.

17. The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of screening prospective members that respond to the advertisement in order to determine whether they should be added to the group.

18. The method of claim 14, further comprising the steps of electronically collaborating among group members using the user-defined networked environment.

19. The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of destroying the user-defined networked environment when it is no longer needed.

20. The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting a transaction engine that implements an auction to members of the group.

21. The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting a transaction engine that implements an on-line electronic survey comprising survey questions that are to be answered electronically by survey participants.

22. The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting a transaction engine that implements a bid-and-proposal tool that permits group members to electronically submit bids on one or more proposals.

23. The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting an online ordering engine that permits group members to electronically order goods or services in the user-defined networked environment.

24. The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of selecting an Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) compatible interface that executes electronic commercial transactions between two or more group members.

25. The method of claim 14, wherein step (2) comprises the step of a selecting an electronic brain-writing tool that permits participants to brainstorm using electronic idea cards.

26. A system for implementing a user-defined networked environment that can be created without the need for system administrator-level privileges, comprising:

a plurality of networked computers that communicate using Internet Protocol;

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1   a plurality of web browsers executing on the plurality of networked computers;

2   a database that stores information concerning the user-defined networked environment;

3   and

4   a computer program executing on one or more of the plurality of networked computers,

5   wherein the computer program performs the steps of:

6   (1) permitting a user to create a group comprising a plurality of group members;

7   (2) permitting the user to select a plurality of web-based communication, collaboration,

8   and transaction tools from a list of available tools, wherein the selected tools are to be made

9   available to the plurality of group members; and

10   (3) automatically generating a web page accessible to the plurality of group members,

11   wherein the web page provides access to the plurality of tools selected in step (2) to the plurality

12   of group members.

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